

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000669

SIPDIS

CAIRO FOR MAXSTADT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/09/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MEETING WITH PDP CHAIRMAN

Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter. Reason: 1.5(d).

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Ambassador met with People's Democratic Party (PDP) National Chairman Audu Ogbeh on Wednesday April 9. The two discussed the upcoming elections and the ruling party's prospects, as well as the anti-violence Code of Conduct for the parties and INEC's preparedness. Ogbeh agreed to sign the Code of Conduct and promised he would try to do so jointly with the opposition ANPP. END SUMMARY.

IS EVERYTHING READY?

12. (C) PDP National Chairman Audu Ogbeh opposed the idea of a postponement of elections. (NOTE: Several opposition parties have been advocating that a delay was needed because of their concern about The Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) preparedness for conducting the elections. END NOTE) The constitution declares that all office holders must relinquish their authority at midnight on May 28. If the elections are not held and a new Administration not sworn in on May 29, the government would be operating with no constitutional authority. Such an extra-constitutional "remedy" would set a hugely negative precedent for Nigeria and the rest of Africa.

13. (C) Ogbeh admitted INEC had numerous problems but said it was in a position to hold the elections. The voters' register has been displayed, and the parties are set to receive CD-ROMs of the voters roll this week. Ogbeh felt that one reason many Nigerians have disparaged INEC was that most people have not traveled to their wards to inspect the lists themselves. Another problem, Ogbeh said, is the space for the thumbprint on the ballots. During Ogbeh's meeting with INEC and other parties the day before, he said it was agreed that the index finger rather than the thumb could be used for marking the ballot.

PDP'S CHANCES

14. (C) Ogbeh thought the PDP campaign was doing very well, better than other parties. However, he predicted violence in Lagos and Benue. Other states where violence could occur are Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Kwara and Plateau. He predicted there would be no violence in Kano or Kaduna.

15. (C) In the Muslim North, Ogbeh predicted President Obasanjo would win in Kano and Kebbi, with Katsina a toss-up between the President and Buhari. He also predicted that two-thirds of the South-East would vote for Obasanjo. With Obasanjo doing well in the South-East and in some Northern states, Ogbeh was confident of victory, expecting 60 to 65 percent of the overall vote on the first ballot; there would be no run-off. In gubernatorial elections, he predicted PDP losses in Anambra and Borno, with Plateau a possibility; however, the PDP would make gains in Oyo, Ekiti and Osun, and possibly Ogun. Ogbeh admitted that too many PDP gains in the South-West would cause problems, as the area had been exclusively controlled by the Alliance for Democracy Party (AD). However, the AD could no longer argue that the South-West should be its exclusive preserve since the AD itself was contesting elections in Borno, Benue, Anambra and Plateau. This abrogated any prior PDP assurances that it would not contest in the South-West.

CODE OF CONDUCT

16. (C) Ambassador Jeter asked that the PDP sign the INEC Code of Conduct. The Code had been signed by all but four of the 30 parties. Two of the four were the PDP and ANPP, the main opposition. Jeter stressed that signing the Code was symbolically important for the entire nation. This would have even greater impact if the PDP and ANPP signed together. Ogbeh agreed and promised to get in touch with ANPP Chairman Etiebet to request that the two party chairmen sign together the next day.

17. COMMENT: Despite a merciless campaign schedule, Chairman Ogbeh was relaxed throughout the meeting and appeared genuinely confident that Obasanjo would retain the Presidency. His measurement of Obasanjo's strength in the North does not completely tally with ours. However, Ogbeh's assessment of the gubernatorial races seemed objective and realistic. Ogbeh's agreement to sign the Code of Conduct was welcome news. Although late in the game, anything that can be done to discourage violence and encourage responsible political behavior will help.
JETER